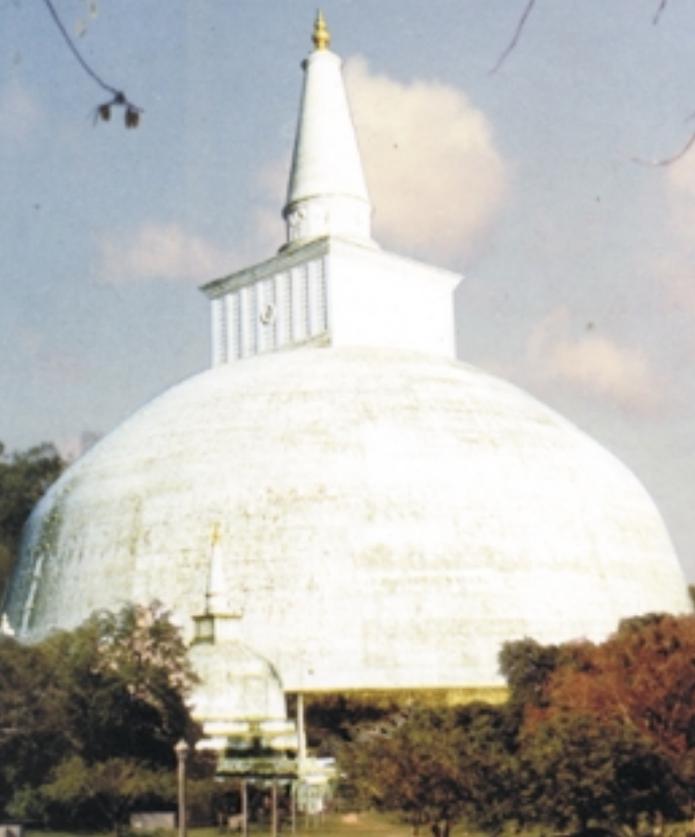


RUVANVELI - SEYA

THE WONDROUS STŪPA
BUILT BY GODS AND MEN



by

The Most Venerable Tripitaka Teacher
Nāryana Ariyaratnamā Maha Thera

RUVANVELI-SEYA

THE WONDROUS STŪPA

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RUVANVELI-SEYA

THE UNIQUE GREAT STŪPA

(BUDDHA'S RELIC MONUMENT)

IN SRĪ LĀŅKĀ

by
The Most Venerable Tripiṭaka Teacher
Nāuyana Ariyadhamma Maha Thera

Compiled from *Thūpavaṅsa*,
the Sinhalese Chronicle on Ruvanveli-seya,
by
The Most Venerable Tripiṭaka Teacher
Nāuyana Ariyadhamma Maha Thera

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Svarṇamālī Mahā Caitya
Rājayānan Vahanse

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Venerable Nāuyane Ariyadhamma is the most sought after monk in Sri Lanka as a meditation teacher by those who are seriously treading the Noble Eight-Fold Path, and in the year 2006, will be completing his 50th year as a member of the Saṅgha. His reputation as a Pāli Tripiṭaka teacher, a Dhamma preacher/writer and a meditation master, has been enhanced by the fact that he is the only one in Sri Lanka who knows the entire Pāli Tripiṭaka, comprising of the Sutta, Abhidhamma and the Vinaya Pitaka, by heart! Knowing the entire Buddhist Canon in Pāli by memory makes him a monk apart and an adornment to the entire community of the Saṅgha.

As Secretary of the Galduwa forest monks, an institution which embraces over 100 meditation hermitages dotted across the length and breadth of the island, Venerable Ariyadhamma has his work cut out travelling to these centres when the need arises and advising the monks whether it be on matters of the Dhamma or otherwise, and laymen on any question put before him. As a virtuous and a mindful monk he is able to fulfill all these duties to the satisfaction of all since his credibility is unquestionable and unimpeachable.

It is indeed our fortune to have come across the original work of this book in Sinhala by Ven. Ariyadhamma Maha Thera. This is the first time that this book has been translated to English.

Mahinda Wijesinghe
August 2002

P r e f a c e

On the Vesak (May) full-moon day of 2002, the three of us, Dr. Sarath Amarasekara, Mahinda Wijesinghe and Dr. Mahen Wijesuriya were, as has been our custom for the past few years, indulging in Dhamma discussions, a practice we follow each full-moon (poya) day. This time it was at Dikhena Meditation Centre, Polgasovita. There, the Venerable Nāuyana Ariyadhamma's booklet on Ruvanveliseya held us spellbound as we read the wondrous story of how Arahants, gods and men combined to construct the Great Stūpa and pay proper tribute to the largest collection of the Buddha's relics enshrined in one place.

The stūpa was the result of a magnificent construction on the outside and incredibly marvellous inside. The tens of thousands of Arahants who assisted in the construction determined: 'The relic-chamber shall not shake even by an earthquake; flowers such as jasmine that were offered on that day shall not wither till the end of Buddha Gotama's Dispensation; the lamps that were kindled with ghee-oil shall not be extinguished; the clay that was mixed with perfume and sandalwood shall not dry; even a single scratch shall not appear within the relic-chamber; stains shall not appear in any of the golden goods that were offered; inimical persons should not be able to even see the relic-chamber.'

May sound fiction? Then, to the one who has no faith coupled with wisdom, even the benefits accruing in this very life from observing the *five precepts* may seem a tall story.

In order that English-speaking people too would read, understand and savour this amazing story, we requested Venerable Ñāṇadassana Thero of Nissaraṇa Vanaya, Meetirigala, to translate this booklet from the Singhalese. He willingly did both in record time: he translated it, and

obtained permission from the author, Venerable Nāuyana Ariyadhamma, to publish an English version of his booklet. In addition, for the convenience of the reader, he compiled an Appendix and inserted Endnotes with useful information.

So, as The Buddha exhorted: *Ehipassiko* (Come and see for yourself.)

May all beings be happy.

Dr. Sarath Amarasekara
Mahinda Wijesinghe
Dr. Mahen Wijesuriya
August 2002.

The gift of the Dhamma excels all other gifts
(Sabba-dānaṃ dhamma-dānaṃ jināti)

This booklet is dedicated to the memory of my son Chrysantha Prasanna Wijesinghe (31) who died in the prime of his life. I wish to thank Venerable Ñāṇadassana Thero for having so willingly undertaken to do the translation, and all my friends in the Dhamma who assisted in this venture by contributing towards the publication and helped in numerous other ways.

May the merit arising from publishing this booklet accrue to all, and may it assist my son in his future wanderings in Saṃsāra to find noble friends in wholesome abodes until he reaches the Deathless State.

Mahinda Wijesinghe
August 2002.

1. Introduction

Namo tassa Bhagavato, Arahato, Sammā Sambuddhassa

Homage to Him, the Exalted One, the Worthy and Perfectly
Enlightened One

*‘Evaṇ acintiyā Buddhā,
Buddha-dhammā acintiyā,
Acintiyesu pasannānaṇ,
Vipāko hoti acintiyō’ ti.*¹

‘Thus are the Buddhas incomprehensible,
And incomprehensible are
The extraordinary qualities of the Buddhas,²
And incomprehensible is the reward of those,
Who are pleased in the incomprehensible Ones.’

Two thousand five hundred and ninety years ago, after conquering Death (*Māra*) under the splendid Bodhi-tree at the sacred site in Buddhagayā, The Buddha Gotama, the great sage of the Sakyan clan, the Bearer of the ten great powers and Omniscient One, purified Himself of all mental defilements along with their past tendencies (*vā sanas*), and by attaining omniscience He realized the supramundane state of a Sammā Sambuddha (Perfectly Enlightened One).

Throughout forty-five years He gave to beings in this world with its gods His teaching that leads to the undecaying and deathless ‘city’ of Nibbāna.

Two thousand five hundred and forty-five years ago He passed into Parinibbāna (full Nibbāna), at the sal-tree grove near the town of Kusiṇāra, India.

Formerly, the Teaching of Kakusanda, Koṇāgamana and Kassapa, the three past Buddhas that appeared in this auspicious great world cycle (*mah -bhadra-kappa*), was

established in Srī Laṅkā. Gotama, the present Buddha too came, during His life, three times to Srī Laṅkā and made it a Buddhist island.

Out of the five great determinations The Buddha Gotama made on behalf of Srī Laṅkā the fifth one was: ‘In the year 406 of the Buddhist era, the great king Duṭṭhagāmaṇi shall build the Great Stūpa Ruvanveli (Svarṇamālī)³ in Anuradhapura, the capital of Srī Laṅkā. During the ceremony of enshrining there one doṇa⁴ of the sacred relics, these shall rise in the air, create a Buddha image that shall radiate the six rays of a Buddha, and shall exhibit the Twin Miracle (*yāma-pāṭihāriya*). This occurred as He determined.

2. The Establishment of the Buddha’s Teaching in Srī Laṅkā

The third Buddhist Council took place in the year 235 of the Buddhist era with the support of the Emperor Dharmā - soka, and the leadership of the great Arahant Moggalīputta-tissa. The Buddha’s Teaching was, during this period, established in nine countries. In Srī Laṅkā it was the great Arahant Mahinda, the son of the Emperor Dharmāsoka, that came to establish the Buddha’s Teaching, and thus became the ‘illuminator’ of the island.

With the patronage of the great king Devānampiya-Tissa, he established the Buddha’s Teaching in Srī Laṅkā on the full-moon day of June (Poson), in the year 236 of the Buddhist era. He established sacred objects of worship, such as: Thūpārāma, the relic-monument where The Buddha’s right clavicle relic was enshrined; the sacred Bodhi-tree; stūpas in every yojana⁵ in which relics were enshrined; and Bodhi-trees that grew out of eight or thirty-two seeds⁶. He fixed a great monastic boundary (*sīmā*) extending up to three yojanas, and by conducting a Vinaya Council at Thūpārāma he brought up the Order of monks. He also created the Order

of nuns. Thus it was the great Arahant Mahinda who, with the patronage of the great king Devānampiya-Tissa, established the Buddha's Teaching in Srī Laṅkā.

King Devānampiya-Tissa was profoundly gladdened when he heard from the great Arahant Mahinda that four Buddhas along with Arahants visited the place where the stūpa Ruvanveli shall be built and made use of it by sitting in the attainment of cessation (*nirodha-samāpatti*); and also that the King's grandson, the king Duṭṭhagāmaṇi will build the stūpa after enshrining in it one doṇa of Buddha Gotama's relics. Hearing this, king Devānampiya-Tissa had an inscribed stone pillar, eighteen cubits high, erected on that spot. He inscribed also a golden leaf, placed it in a casket and deposited it in the gate of his palace.

In the year 383 of the Buddhist era, after ascending the throne, the great king Duṭṭhagāmaṇi arrived from the region Ruhūṇu (south Srī Laṅkā) to the capital Anurādhapura (north Srī Laṅkā) and on the way won thirty-two great battles. The king thereafter united Srī Laṅkā and caused Buddhism to flourish. He spent thirty koṭis (crores) of money and had the stūpa Mariccavattī be build, and nine-teen more koṭis and had the Brazen Palace (Lohapāsāda) be constructed. He spent one lakh and made offerings to the sacred Bodhi-tree, and after reading the inscription on the golden leaf and the stone pillar inscribed by the great king Devānampiya-Tissa, he felt immense joy and determined to build the Great Stūpa Ruvanveli.

3. The Appearance of the Building Materials for the Great Stūpa

When the great king Duṭṭhagāmaṇi thought 'How shall I obtain the necessary building materials for the Great Stūpa without oppressing the people of Srī Laṅkā?' god Vissakamma⁷ being commanded by Sakka, the king of gods,

created all the building materials within a day. From the bank of the river Gambhīra, situated a yojana to the north of Anurādhapura he created bricks; from the village Avuruviṭi (*Ācāravittṭhi*), situated three yojanas to the north-east, he created nuggets of gold; from the village Tambapittha, situated seven yojanas to the east, he created copper; from the village Samanveve (*Sumanavāpi*), situated four yojanas to the south-east, he created gems; from the rock-cave Ridī (*Ambatṭhakola*), situated eight yojanas to the south, he created silver; from the small town Uruvel, situated five yojanas to the west, he created pearls and corals to the size of myrobalan (*nelli*) fruits; and from the village Pelavāpi (*Pelivāpika*), situated seven yojanas to the north-east, he created four large gems. The king received everything the god Vissakamma created and safeguarded it with immense joy.

4. The Beginning of the Work in the Great Stūpa

King Duṭṭhagāmaṇi began the work of building the Great Stūpa Ruvanveli on the full-moon day of the month of Vesākha (April-May), under the constellation of Visākha, that is, on such a sacred full-moon day on which numerous historical events took place: the definite declaration (*niyata-vivaraṇa*) by Buddha Dīpaṅkara to the ascetic Sumedha (*Bodhisatta Gotama* in a past life) that he will become a Buddha; the birth of Bodhisatta Gotama from Tusita heaven in the human world; His arrival in the city of Kapilavatthu; His performance of the Twin Miracle; His arrival in Srī Laṅkā three times; his passing into Parinibbāna; the disembarkment of Prince Vijaya in Srī Laṅkā; the coronation of the great king Devānampiya-Tissa, and so forth.

On such a full-moon day king Duṭṭhagāmaṇi had the inscribed stone pillar that was erected by king Devānampiya-Tissa, removed; had the site leveled; had it dug to a depth of seven cubits; had round stones spread there by warriors;

and had the stones broken with hammers; then he had them stamped down by elephants; had fine clay⁸, that was brought from the Himalayas by Arahant novices, spread over the layer of stones; had bricks laid over the fine clay, rough plaster over the bricks, quartz over the rough plaster, a network of iron over the quartz, fragrant clay over the network of iron, white stones over the fragrant clay, rock-crystal over the white stones, and slabs of stones over the rock-crystal. And again he had mercury, resin of the wood-apple, and fine clay mixed together; had these spread over the slabs of stones; and had bronze sheets eight inches thick laid over these. He had arsenic and sesame oil mixed together; had these spread over the bronze sheets; and had silver sheets four inches thick laid over these. When the king had thus built and completed the foundation of the Great Stūpa, he arranged that the foundation stone should be laid on the full-moon day of the month of Āāsāḥa (June-July).

He then had Anurādhapura decorated like a divine city along with the terrace of the Great Stūpa. Ninety-six koṭis of Arahants came by air from India. On the full-moon day of the month of Āsāḥa, under the constellation of Uttarā-sāḥa, he laid the foundation-stone of the Great Stūpa and determined: 'Should the work I carry for this Stūpa be completed safely, may then the Venerable Arahants Buddha-rakkhita, Dhammarakkhita, Saṅgharakkhita and Ānanda arrive and stand at the four quarters of the Great Stūpa's terrace.' This happened as he determined. The Arahant Indagutta arranged that it should thus happen.

In addition, the Venerable Arahants, Siddhattha, Maṅgala, Paduma, Sīvalī, Candagutta, Indagutta, Suriyagutta, Cittasena, Jayasena, and Acala looking eastwards arrived and stood in front of the pitcher placed at the gate of this festive occasion. Supatitṭhita, the son of Nandisena and Sumana-devi, and the minister appointed for the festive ceremonies,

walked around the relic-chamber and went and brought a staff made of silver for measuring the circular boundary of the Stūpa. When Arahant Siddhattha saw the minister walking thus around the relic-chamber and measuring too large dimensions, he ordered him to measure moderate ones. On hearing the name of Arahant Siddhattha, the names of the eleven other Arahants, and the name of the minister and his parents, king Duṭṭhagāmaṇi felt particularly glad, thinking: 'The work on the Stūpa will certainly be successful.' He then had eight large water pots of gold and eight of silver placed in the midst of the Great Stūpa, and had a hundred and eight vases placed around the large water pots. He had, likewise, eight bricks of gold placed in eight corners and a hundred and eight bricks of silver around each of the bricks of gold.

Arahant Cittasena placed a lump of fragrant resin in the east side upon the boundary line drawn around the Great Stūpa. Arahant Jayasena sprinkled scented water over it, and when, under the constellation of Uttarāsāḥa, Supatitṭhita, the minister for the festive ceremonies, placed bricks of gold together with lavish offerings over the scented water, then the earth, all of two hundred seventy thousand yojanas, roared and quaked. He had through his sons, similarly, placed bricks of gold in the other seven sides of the Great Stūpa.

Afterwards, king Duṭṭhagāmaṇi and the people there honoured with gifts the Arahants who were seated at the four quarters, and took themselves seats to hear a Dhamma talk delivered that day by the great Arahant Piyadassī. Having heard it, forty thousand people became Arahants, forty thousand were established in the fruit of stream-entry (*sotāpatti-phala*), a thousand became once-returners (*sakadāgamis*), and a thousand became non-returners (*anāgamis*). Eighteen thousand monks and fourteen thousand nuns became Arahants.

5. The Making of the Relic-Chamber in the Great Stūpa

King Duṭṭhagāmaṇi invited the ninety-six koṭis of Arahanṭs who came from India to stay in Srī Laṅkā until the completion of the relic-chamber. They, however, consented to stay for only a week because the king had a lot of work to carry out.

At that time god Vissakamma possessed the master-builder who undertook to build the Great Stūpa. He made him fill a golden bowl with water, made him strike the surface of the water with the back of his nail, causing a water bubble (*bubbula*) like a crystal globe to be formed; thus prompting the king to be pleased to build the Great Stūpa in a similar form (*bubbulākāra*). The king then ordered that work should here not be done by anyone without wages. According to a determination of the Arahanṭs, as soon as the three flower-terraces of the Great Stūpa were built in brick, they sunk to the level of the ground nine times so as the relic-chamber should be firm and not shake even by an earthquake.

Charged by the great Arahanṭs, the two Arahanṭ novices Uttara and Sumana brought from the island Uttarakuru six massive fat-coloured stone-bars, eighty cubits in length and breadth, and eight cubits thick. They laid one on the flower-terrace of the Great Stūpa, and when they arranged four others on the four sides [in the fashion of a chest] these were, due to the might of the Arahanṭs' determination, well joined together. Then they hid the other three stone-bars in order to use them as a lid when the work for the closing up of the relic-chamber would be completed.

The king had all the artwork in the relic-chamber made with the seven precious materials only (i.e. gold, silver, pearls, gems, cat's-eye gems, diamonds, and corals). All the events of the Buddha's story from the time He lay at the feet of The Buddha Dīpaṅkara till He attained to Buddhahood; from the time He attained Buddhahood till He passed

into Parinibbāna; and from the time He passed into Parinibbāna till His Teaching was brought from India and was established in Srī Laṅkā - everything was depicted with the seven precious materials. In the midst of the relic-chamber he had made the Buddha's diamond throne (*vajirāsana*) facing the east, measuring thirteen cubits, and costing one koṭi. With the seven precious materials he had made also a Bodhi-tree, eighteen cubits high. He had the death-bed of The Buddha (*parinibbāna-mañcaka*) made out of silver with the head towards the north and costing one koṭi. Thus, due to the power of the merits of the great king Duṭṭhagāmaṇi who fulfilled his perfections (*pāramis*) throughout hundred thousand word cycles (*kappas*) and one Asaṅkheyya, and due to the divine power of the gods and the determination-power of the Arahanṭs, the complete Buddha story without remainder was finished in life-size within the relic-chamber with the use of the seven precious materials. God Vissakamma worked from the very beginning till the end by possessing the master-builder who undertook to build the Great Stūpa, while the great Arahanṭ Indagutta, who was gifted with the six supernormal faculties (*chaḷabhiñña*), supervised the work.

6. The Bringing of the Buddha's Relics in the Great Stūpa

After The Buddha's Parinibbāna, His relics were enshrined and worshipped in stūpas by Princes of eight countries ṅ two quarts (*n i*) in each country. In order to protect The Buddha's relics, the great Arahanṭ Mah Kassapa collected, except the relics that were enshrined in the village R mag -ma, all the relics from the other seven countries and, with the patronage of the king Aj tasattu, enshrined them in the stūpa V la-sa gh ta.

Since the stūpa that was built in the village Rāmagāma by the Koliya kings was on the shore of the river Ganges, it

was destroyed by flood and the urn with the relics was submerged in the ocean. The nāgas carried the urn to the nāga palace Maṭṭerika and handed it over to the nāga king Mahā-kāla. He placed it under a pavilion, paid homage to it with gifts and protected it.

The two quarts of relics that were enshrined in the village Rāmagāma were, according to The Buddha's determination, destined to be enshrined in the Great Stūpa Ruvanveli.

King Duṭṭhagāmaṇi who, on the full-moon day of the month of Āsāḷha (June-July), under the constellation of Uttarāsāḷha, would officiate in the ceremony for the enshrining of the relics in the Great Stūpa, worshipped the Saṅgha (Order of monks) on the day before the full-moon day, reminded them that tomorrow is the appointed day for the enshrining of the relics and requested them to give him the relics. The Saṅgha ordered then the novice Arahant Soṇuttara, who was gifted with the six supernormal faculties, to bring the relics.

Being commanded by Sakka, the king of gods, god Vissakamma arrived then and leveled the entire ground of Sī Laṅkā as if the surface of a drum. He spread white sand on it and decorated the whole island like a divine city. The entire solar system became then adorned like those auspicious days when Bodhisata Gotama took birth in the human world, attained Buddhahood, and preached the Dhammacakkappavattana sutta. Crowds of people in Sī Laṅkā arrived to the ceremony appropriately adorned. Arrayed in all his ornaments and accompanied by his retinue, king Duṭṭhagāmaṇi proceeded to the courtyard of the Great Stūpa in glory like Sakka, king of gods. Ninety-six koṭis of Arahants arrived then by air and assembled in the courtyard of the Great Stūpa.

The novice Arahant Soṇuttara, a resident of Pūjāparivena, went, according to the Saṅgha's order, to the world of the nāgas in a short time and appeared there in order to obtain the Buddha's relics from the nāga king Mahākāla.

The nāga king Mahākāla rose from his seat, washed the novice's feet with scented water, invited him to sit, honoured him with scents and flowers, worshipped him and inquired about his arrival. 'Great king' replied the novice Soṇuttara, 'I arrived here from Sī Laṅkā. The Saṅgha there has been invited by the great king Duṭṭhagāmaṇi to enshrine, on this auspicious occasion today, the Buddha's relics in the Great Stūpa. Being ordered by the Saṅgha, I came here to take the relics that are with you.' He told him further that one doṇa of the relics is with him [the nāga king] and that according to the Buddha's determination these are destined to be enshrined in the Great Stūpa. Not willing to give the relics, the nāga king Mahākāla winked at his nephew Vāsuladatta to hide the relic-urn. Vāsuladatta swallowed the relic-urn and hid himself at one side of Mount Mahāmera. When the nāga king Mahākāla came to know that the relic-urn had been hidden, he brought the novice Soṇuttara under the pavilion where the relics formerly were and described to him how he had paid homage to them with gifts.

The novice Soṇuttara told him that however much gifts one would offer to the relics, the Buddha is only pleased with those who comprehend the path, the fruit and Nibbāna; and that the nāga king should offer these relics to those who can acquire such comprehension. The nāga king Mahākāla said: 'Venerable Sir, there are no relics with me. Please tell the Saṅgha in Sī Laṅkā to obtain relics from some other place.' However, since the novice Soṇuttara was gifted with the six supernormal faculties and could thus see everything with the divine eye, he asked the nāga king: 'Great king, should there be any relics with you, shall then I take them?' 'Venerable Sir, should there be any relics with me, please take them', replied the nāga king. Three times did the novice Soṇuttara make him promise this word and, while they were discussing thus, he created a slender [long invisible] arm, took the relic-urn that was swallowed

by Vāsuladatta, and told the nāga king: ‘I am going.’ He then immediately vanished from the nāga world, appeared in the courtyard of the Great Stūpa, and handed the Buddha’s relics over to the Saṅgha.

Thinking that the novice Soṇuttara had gone with empty hands, the nāga king Mahākā la summoned his nephew and inquired about the relic-urn. When they, however, came to know its absence they both cried and lamented. Accompanied then with their retinue of nāgas they came to the human world, fell on the ground, worshipped the feet of the Saṅgha humbly, and requested to return the relics. The Saṅgha consoled them with a dhamma talk and handed over a few of the relics. Then king Duṭṭhagāmaṇi received from the Saṅgha the Buddha’s relics upon his head in a casket and departed from the golden pavilion in the midst of manifold offerings and honours made by gods and Brahma. He circumambulated the relic-chamber three times, entered to it from the east, and when he thought of laying the relic-casket on a silver couch one koṭi worth, the relic-casket rose, according to the Buddha’s determination, into the air and opened itself. One doṇa of the Buddha’s relics then took the form of the Buddha and performed the marvelous Twin Miracle in the same way as the Buddha Himself did it during His lifetime at the foot of the gaṇḍamba-tree⁹, after ascending the walking terrace and radiating the six deep-toned rays of a Buddha.

Twelve koṭis of people who saw this amazing miracle attained to Arahantship together with the four analytical knowledges (*paṭisambhidas*). The number of those who attained to the states of *sotāpatti*, *sakadāgāmi*, and *anāgāmi* cannot be limited as ‘this much’. Thrilled with boundless joy, king Duṭṭhagāmaṇi was pleased with the thought ‘I obtained rewards in this very life.’ With his hands that were washed with scented water, he took the relic-casket that

was upon his head and laid it on a silver couch one koṭi worth that was arranged in the north side. An image of the Buddha was then, according to the Buddha’s determination, created in the lion’s recliningposture (*sīhaseyya*), and all the relics were enshrined within that image.

At this auspicious moment of the full-moon day of the month of Āsālha (June-July), under the constellation of Uttarāsālha, when the Buddha’s relics were enshrined thus, the great earth quaked in a particular way roaring with hundred thousand sounds. Thirty-two auspicious omens appeared. The threefold world became adorned with many thousands of amazing miracles. When the enshrining of the relics in the Great Stūpa Ruvanveli was completed, the two novices Uttara and Sumana closed the relic-chamber with the stone-blocks that were previously hidden to be used as a lid.

‘The relic-chamber shall not shake even by an earthquake; flowers such as jasmine that were offered on that day shall not wither till the end of Buddha Gotama’s Dispensation; the lamps that were kindled with ghee-oil shall not be extinguished; the clay that was mixed with perfume and sandalwood shall not dry; even a single scratch shall not appear within the relic-chamber; stains shall not appear in any of the golden goods that were offered.’ All this occurred by the determination-power of all Arahants present. They determined also that inimical persons should not be able to even see the relic-chamber.

Furthermore, by order of king Duṭṭhagāmaṇi, the people of Srī Laṅkā enshrined, along with many other objects such as golden and silver caskets, thousand more of the Buddha’s relics over the relic-chamber.

7. Going to Tusita-Heaven

When the unique Great Stūpa Ruvanveli was completed as far as the square turret¹⁰, and while ninety-six koṭis of Arahants were chanting protective suttas, the great king

Duṭṭhagāmaṇi who reigned in Srī Laṅkā for twenty-four years, had his record of meritorious deeds read and, while looking at the Great Stūpa, he passed away and was born as a divine king in the Tusita-heaven. His brother, the king Saddhātissa, completed the remaining work at the Great Stūpa and later was also born in the Tusita-heaven.

During the Dispensation of the future Buddha Metteyya, king Duṭṭhagāmaṇi will become the Buddha's chief disciple on His right side. King Saddhātissa will become the chief disciple on His left side. Kāvantissa and Vihāra Mahā - Devī ¹¹ will become the parents of the future Buddha Metteyya. Princess Anulā, the younger sister of king Kāvantissa, will become the chief Queen of the Bodhisatta Metteyya. Prince Sāl iya ¹² will become the son of the Bodhisatta Metteyya. Saṅgha, king Duṭṭhagāmaṇi's Chancellor of the Exchequer, will become the chief attendant of the Buddha Metteyya. The Chancellor's daughter will become the chief she-attendant.

*'Evaṅ acintiyā Buddhā,
Buddha-dhammā acintiyā,
Acintiyesu pasannānaṅ,
Vipāko hoti acintiyō'ti*

'Thus are the Buddhas incomprehensible,
And incomprehensible are
The extraordinary qualities of the Buddhas,
And incomprehensible is the reward of those,
Who are pleased in the incomprehensible Ones.'

*'Sayiṅsu yasmiṅ Sugatassa dhātu
Nimmāya raṅsujjāla-buddha-rūpaṅ,
Suvanṇamālī ti patīta-nāmaṅ,
Vandāmahaṅ thūpa-varaṅ mahaggaṅ.'*¹³

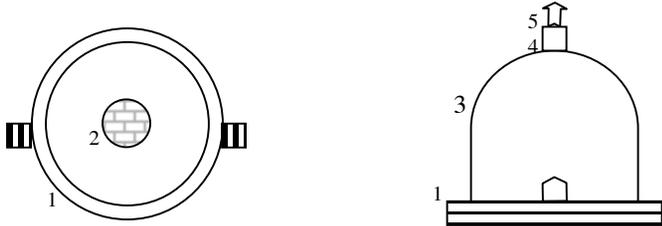
'I worship that renown,

Precious, and excellent stūpa
Known as Suvanṇamālī ,
Where the Buddha's relics repose
Within a created Buddha image
Radiating the six rays of a Buddha.'

Sādhu! Sādhu!! I pay my homage!

Appendix

Five Major Elements of a St pa



A st pa (hemispherical relic-monument) consists of five major elements: (1) the **cylindrical base** with one or three circular terraces (*medh* or *m laka*), serving also as a circular path for circumambulations (*padak i patha*) which is reached by one or several stairways (*sop na*), (2) the **relic-chamber** (*dh tu-gabbha*) that is in the upper part of the cylindrical base, (3) the **dome** (*a da*), usually hemi-spherical, and ordinarily raised on the cylindrical base, (4) the **square turret** (*caturassa-caya* or *harmik*), a block of brickwork that surmounts the dome, and (5) the **conical spire** (*chatta* = parasol) based on the square turret that crowns the whole monument. (Please see: *History of Indian Buddhism*, E. Lamotte, Universitē Catholique de Louvain-Paris, 1988, p.311; and *The Mah va sa*, Wilhelm Geiger, Government Press, Colombo, 1986, p. 219)

Endnotes

¹ *Thūpaṇsa* p.43. This stanza occurs originally in *Apadāna-pāli* i. 6 (roman), where the Buddha utters it as a reply to a question asked by Venerable Ānanda. It is copied, according to the context, by other works, such as *Thūpaṇsa*, *Nettipakaraṇa*, *Mahāvaṇsa*, *Jīnava sadīpanī*, and *Samantap s dik* (Vinaya Commentary) etc.

² *Buddha-dhammā* are called *āveṇika-dhammā* (the extraordinary qualities of the Buddhas) and are 18 in number: (1) seeing all things past, (2) present, (3) future, (4) propriety of actions of the body, (5) of

speech, (6) of thought, (7) firmness of intuition, (8) of memory, (9) of samādhi, (10) of energy, (11) of wisdom, (12) of emancipation, (13) freedom from fickleness, (14) noise, (15) confusion, (16) haste, (17) heedlessness, and (18) inconsideration. (*Pāli-English Dictionary*, The Pāli Text Society, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., London, 1972.) Please see also *Dīgha Nikāya Commentary* iii.993 (roman), and *Dīgha Nikāya Subcommentary* iii.255 (Myanmar). Other extraordinary qualities of the Buddhas are the 37 factors of Enlightenment (*sattatiṇsa-bodhipakkhiyadhamm*), such as the four Foundations of Mindfulness; or the ten powers of a Buddha, etc. (*Mahānidessa Commentary* ii.268 (roman)).

³ According to the tradition, *Svarṇamālī* or *Suvaṇṇamāl* is the original name. It refers to a deity called so. She was dwelling on a tree where the Great St pa (*Mahāthūpa*) was planned to be built. When king Du-hag ma i ordered that the tree should be cut and the site be leveled, *Suvaṇṇamālī* objected to it. When she, however, was told that the Buddha's relics will be enshrined in the Great Stūpa, she consented under the condition that her name (*Suvaṇṇamālī*) should be given to the Great Stūpa. The king agreed, the tree was cut, and the Great Stūpa is since then known in Pāli as *Suvaṇṇamālī* (lit. one bearing golden or beautiful flowers). (This information was imparted to the translator by the author upon the former's question about the origin of this name.) In Sanskrit is known as *Svarṇamālī* and in Sinhalese as *Ratnamālī* or *Ruvanmelī*, all meaning the same. Other Pāli names are: *Mahācetiya*, *Ratanavāluka*, *Ratana-vāli* (thus *Ruvan-yeli* in Sinhalese), *Soṇṇamālī* (*Hemamālī*), and *Hemavāluka*. (Please see *Dictionary of Pāli Proper Names*, G.P. Malalasekera, Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., London, 1974: **Mahā -thū pa**.)

⁴ **doṇa** 1/8 of a bushel [i.e. approx. 4 litres]. (*Concise Pāli-English Dictionary*, A.P. Buddhadatta Mahāthera, The Colombo Apothecaries Co. Ltd., Colombo, 1957), or 'four gallons' (*Sinhalese-English Dictionary*, Charles Carter, M.D. Gu asena & Co.Ltd., Colombo, 1965: **droṇa**).

⁵ A distance of approx. 9 kms.

⁶ In the twelfth year of Dharmāsoka's reign the right branch of the Bodhi-tree was brought from Buddhagaya by his daughter, the nun Saṅghamittā, to Anurādhapura and placed by his son, the great Arahant Mahinda, and king Devānampiya-Tissa in the park Mahāmeghavana. From the seeds of a fruit which grew on the tree sprang eight saplings, which were planted at eight different villages and monasteries. Thirty-two other saplings, from four other fruits, were planted here and there at a distance of one yojana. These Bodhi-trees were respectively known

as *aṭṭha-phala-ruha* and *dvetiṅsa-phala-ruha* (grown out of eight (*aṭṭha*), and thirty-two (*dvetiṅsa*) saplings.) Worth noting is also that, according to the Sinhalese Chronicles, branches from the Bodhi-trees of all the Buddhas born during this *kappa* were planted in Srī Laṅkā on the spot where the sacred Bodhi-tree stands today in Anurādhapura. (Please see *Dictionary of Pāli Proper Names*, G.P. Malalasekera, Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., London, 1974: **Bodhirukkha**.)

⁷ The god of skill; Skt. Visvakarman.

⁸ Pāli: *navanīta-mattika* (lit. butter-clay) used as cement.

⁹ The mango-tree at the gate of S vatthi.

¹⁰ Please see *Appendix*, element 4.

¹¹ King Duṭṭhagāmaṇi's parents.

¹² King Duṭṭhagāmaṇi's son.

¹³ This stanza is composed by an unknown poet, and is recited by pilgrims to the Great Stūpa. 'The Great Stūpa has been a place of pilgrimage for Buddhists from the time of its building down to the present day. When the Buddha's *sāsana* disappears, all the relics of the Buddha deposited in various cetiyas all over Srī Laṅkā will gather together at the Great Stūpa, and from there will go to the Rajāyatana-cetiya in Nāgadīpa (north-west Srī Laṅkā), thence to the Mahā -bodhi-pallaṅka, Buddhagaya, where all the relics, assembled from everywhere, will take the form of the Buddha seated at the foot of the Bodhi-tree. Then they will be consumed by self-generated flames. (Please see *Dictionary of Pāli Proper Names*, G.P. Malalasekera, Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., London, 1974: **Mahā -thūpa**.)